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AAHOA Announces Prestigious 2024 Award Winners at AAHOACON24

ORLANDO, FL, Apr. 5 – On the final day of the 2024 AAHOA Convention & Trade Show, AAHOA (the Asian American Hotel Owners Association) proudly shone a spotlight on the outstanding achievements and contributions of individuals in the hospitality industry through its prestigious annual awards program.

Each year, AAHOA recognizes the exceptional endeavors of hoteliers who exemplify service and excellence, selected by an esteemed Independent Awards Selection Committee.

The prestigious AAHOA Awards Program serves as a beacon, illuminating the path of excellence within our industry. As we celebrate this year's award recipients, we pay homage to their unwavering dedication, tireless efforts, and remarkable leadership, which continue to drive our industry and association toward continued prosperity and success.

The following 2024 Award Winners were celebrated on the main stage on the mainstage on Friday:

AAHOA Award of Excellence

This award recognizes a hotelier who has demonstrated strong leadership, has high standards of excellence, and is making a significant contribution to the lodging industry.

- **Dr. Jay S. Patel** – *Chief operating officer of NashBuilt Construction in Pensacola, FL, and an Annual Member in the North Florida Region.*

Cecil B. Day Community Service Award

Named in honor of Cecil B. Day, the founder of Days Inn known for his commitment to community service, this award recognizes someone who has demonstrated a strong commitment to serving his or her community.

- **Hitesh Patel** – *Of Sai Ram Hospitality, LLC, in Argyle, TX, and a Lifetime Member in the North Texas Region.*
- **Prakash Saraf** – *Founder of the non-profit Friends of Sparsh, in Baltimore, MD, and an AAHOA Lifetime Member in the Washington DC Area Region.*

Outreach Award for Philanthropy

This award is given to an individual deeply involved with helping humanity through philanthropic and charitable activities, domestically or overseas.

- **Amit Bhakta** – *Founder and CEO of Nansad Group, in Abilene, TX, and an AAHOA Lifetime Member in the North Texas Region.*

Outstanding HerOwnership Award of Excellence

This award recognizes a woman hotelier for strong leadership and a commitment to lodging excellence, and for her significant contributions to the industry and to her community.

- **Dr. Ruby Dhalla** – *President & CEO of Canada-based Dhalla Group of Companies and an AAHOA Annual Member.*

Outstanding HYPE Award of Excellence

This award is for young hoteliers under the age of 30 who have exemplified the spirit, dedication, and achievement of a professional hotelier.

- **Dhruv Patel** – *Director of operations at Lotus Hospitality in Kansas City, MO, and a Lifetime Member in the Central Midwest Region.*

Political Forum Award for Advocacy

This award is given to an individual who is extensively involved with helping advance AAHOA's mission and the interests of its members by participating in the legislative process through political involvement and government affairs.

- **Ray Patel** – *Owner of Welcome Inn Eagle Rock in Los Angeles, CA, president of the Northeast Los Angeles Hotel Owners Association, and an AAHOA Lifetime Member in the Greater Los Angeles Area Region.*

IAHA Independent Hotel of the Year Award

This award honors an independent hotel that sets a high standard of excellence in quality, service, and guest satisfaction. This award honors a specific hotel rather than an independent hotelier in general.

- **Lexen Hotel** in Hollywood, CA, representing the property is Armaan Patel, founder of AGA Hotels, based in California, an AAHOA Lifetime Member in the Greater Los Angeles Area Region.

“Each year, the AAHOA Awards Program shines a well-deserved spotlight on the dedication and achievements of our members,” **said AAHOA Chairman Miraj S. Patel.** “These exceptional award recipients exemplify excellence in the hospitality industry through their multifaceted contributions. It is a privilege to showcase their outstanding service.”

“Congratulations to each of our award winners,” **said AAHOA Immediate Past Chairman Bharat Patel.** “I am honored to be part of the recognition of their hard work and dedication to improving their communities, our association, and our industry. They are among the standard bearers of our industry.”

“We are delighted to commemorate the 35th anniversary of AAHOA by highlighting the exceptional achievements and contributions of individuals within our association through our esteemed annual awards program,” **said AAHOA President & CEO Laura Lee Blake.** “As we honor this year's award recipients, we celebrate their unwavering dedication, tireless efforts, and exceptional leadership, which inspire us all toward continued prosperity and success within our industry and association.”



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About AAHOA

AAHOA is the largest hotel owners association in the world, with Member-owned properties representing a significant part of the U.S. economy. AAHOA's 20,000 members own 60% of the hotels in the United States and are responsible for 1.7% of the nation's GDP. More than one million employees work at AAHOA Member-owned hotels, earning \$47 billion annually, and member-owned hotels support 4.2 million U.S. jobs across all sectors of the hospitality industry. AAHOA's mission is to advance and protect the business interests of hotel owners through advocacy, industry leadership, professional development, member benefits, and community engagement.